

MINUTES
OPC MEETING
April 19, 2012

First Selectman Jayme Stevenson called the meeting to order at 8:12 a.m. in Room 206 at Town Hall.

Present were First Selectman, Jayme Stevenson; Board of Finance Chairman, Liz Mao, Board of Education Vice-Chairman, Clara Santori; Planning & Zoning Chairman, Fred Conze; RTM Moderator, Karen Armour and Town Administrator, Karl Kilduff.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Ms. Santori stated that the Board of Education is holding the Darien High School graduation on June 14, 2012. It is expected that the student population in the Darien schools may have a slight increase in population next year. Predicting the incoming population, and identifying those with special needs, remains difficult. The group discussed possible ways to better determine students' needs prior to the start of school.

Additionally, with regards to special education, Ms. Santori noted that the Scientifically Based Reach Initiative (SBRI) has been effective in helping address students' needs once they are enrolled in the school system. It's a three tiered program designed to support children that show signs of academic/behavioral struggles. Ms. Mao commented that she recently read an article describing how the lack of proper sleep affects students and recommended that it might be a valuable Parent Awareness lecture.

The Board of Education budget goes before the RTM Finance & Budget Committee on April 23, 2012 and before the RTM Education Committee on April 30, 2012.

Ms. Stevenson recognized the valuable contributions that Dan Haron has made to the Darien school system and expressed her gratitude for his years of service. Ms. Santori reiterated her thoughts and mentioned that the BOE is in the beginning stages of selecting a new High School principal.

BOARD OF FINANCE

Ms. Mao expressed her appreciation for the thorough discussions that took place by her Board members during the Board of Finance budget meetings. The Board worked tirelessly and unanimously passed the budget which has now been referred to the RTM for a final vote. This budget will set the mill rate at 12.68 (an increase of 3.68%). Members of the OPC conversed about various aspects of the Town's budget.

PLANNING & ZONING

Mr. Conze stated that the Town is still involved in lawsuits related to Affordable Housing and that the Planning & Zoning Commission does not expect any significant issues with the approval of the BOE Central Offices/Mather Community Center.

RTM MODERATOR

Ms. Armour stated that the Town Budget will be voted on at the RTM's May 14, 2012 meeting. There are also three gifts to the Town for consideration by the RTM: enhancement of the field at Cherry Lawn by Little League, a shooting range at the Police Department by the Darien Foundation and an estate gift to the Senior Center. Ms. Stevenson suggested that these gifts are more accurately described by the term public/private partnerships.

FIRST SELECTMAN

Ms. Stevenson has received a budget information comparison sheet for neighboring communities. There was some discussion about the reasons for budget increases/decreases in the various communities.

Recently, the City of Stamford and the Town of Darien have been in discussions concerning the Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA). Ms. Stevenson has asked that Darien have a representative on the Board.

Ms. Stevenson met with a representative of Yankee Gas to gain information on the company's long term plans for gas lines throughout Darien. At this time Yankee Gas finds it cost prohibitive to install trunk lines in Darien. Mr. Conze recommended that an advisory group be formed to study the possibility of a pilot project with shared revenue.

Additionally, Ms. Stevenson plans to meet with Dr. Falcone and Betsy Hagerty-Ross, Chairman of the Board of Education, to discuss the opportunities for shared services.

Finally, Ms. Stevenson noted that she toured Gorham's Pond with Selectman Lundeen to learn more about its flooding and sediment issues.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:48 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 17, 2012 at 8:00 a.m. in Room 206.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda O'Leary
Recording Secretary